

The Clipper Visits... Marcia Dowd

By MARTHA HIMES

"I feel like I have lived two different lives," says Marcia Dowd, owner of Dole and Dowd, Ltd., a jewelry store in Halls Corner. In her first life, she was an educator. But really,



she's had three lives, for she's been an active volunteer her entire adult life.

Dowd earned both a bachelor's and master's degree in education, and began her first life as a third grade teacher in the Weymouth public schools. Within three years, she was promoted to the position of supervisor of elementary education.

Shortly after moving to Duxbury in 1970, Dowd attended her first Town Meeting, where she commented on, she believes, the condition of the town dump. She spoke so eloquently that the Town Modera-

continued on page 5

Wednesday, January 1, 2003

Duxbury Clipper

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continued from page one

tor, Charlie Fargo, asked her to serve on the finance committee.

Honored by the appointment, Dowd jumped right in. She was the first woman to serve on the Finance Committee, and additionally, at a mere 27 years old, was so young that she wore glasses she didn't need and pulled her hair back in a bun to make herself look older.

Her second year on the Finance Committee, Dowd set another precedent, as the first woman to give birth while appointed to a town board. Her son William's birth was so noteworthy it was ratified in the town records.

Dowd served five years on the committee. "It was a very interesting, very outspoken, board," she recalled, often debating issues until one or two a.m. "Everything was debated, everything was discussed, everything was agonized over."

Dowd handled the fire department and school budgets. Still a school administrator in Weymouth, there were weeks that she would find herself arguing both sides of the same issue. "Many evenings I would be fighting for a budget item in Weymouth, and the following night, cutting it in Duxbury," she said.

Dowd is still living down one experience she had on the finance committee. "It was a very late meeting, and I was eight and a half months pregnant. We were in a heated debate over field trips. And one particular gentleman [on the committee] had a habit, when



Marcia Dowd was the first woman to serve on Duxbury's finance committee, and the first woman to give birth while appointed to a town board.

he would get fired up over an issue, he would lean, speak loudly, and point a finger in your face. Several times I asked him to stop poking his finger in my face. I finally grabbed his finger to push it away, and it snapped. He held it over me for quite a long time. I guess it was the first time that I really was taken seriously by the boys. We laughed about that for several years—'never put your hands near Marcia's face when it's late at night, especially when she's pregnant, she could hurt you,'" she said.

At the end of her five year term, Dowd retired from teaching and, temporarily, from public service. A divorced single mother, she wanted to concentrate on raising her son. However, since she had handled the school budget for the finance committee, she was encouraged to run for school committee, and soon found herself back as a town volunteer.

She served on the school committee for six years. At the same time, a friend of hers in Weymouth needed help in his

jewelry store. Dowd offered to help and immediately loved the work. "You were making people happy, and when you went home at night you weren't agonizing over a child's learning disability," she said.

In 1981 she married Don Dowd, a widower with five children of his own. With six children to raise, Dowd stepped down from the School Committee.

"At the time, *Eight is Enough* was one of the television programs, and at the end of the half hour, the problem was solved. I couldn't even find out who did it by the end of a half an hour, never mind solving the problem! I found that probably my greatest challenge, mixing two families with three distinct ages of kids," she said.

But Dowd, not one to sit still

for long, found she missed working outside the home. She took on a volunteer position as a member of the Board of Directors, and later Trustee, of Norwich University and the Colleges of Vermont.

"I was also the first female alumni to be made a Trustee at Norwich," she laughed. "I served with two four-star generals. General Al Gray, Commandant of the Marine Corps, nicknamed me 'The Scud,' because I guess there were times I'd explode and they'd never see it coming. He would say that I always had a direct hit."

When her friend sold his jewelry business, Dowd found she had customers in need of jewelry assistance. She started Dole and Dowd as a private collection, by appointment only, operating out of her home. Now, twenty years later, it is located behind the Depot Street Marketplace, with an entrance off Washington Street.

Dole and Dowd carries gold, gemstones, pearls, and silver. Dowd and her staff keep track of the pieces their regular customers own and those they might need to round out their collection.

"I never want a piece of Dole and Dowd jewelry to sit at the bottom of a jewelry box," Dowd explained.

Dowd strives to make men feel comfortable jewelry shopping. "Men are used to buying on performance—a car, a boat,

a stereo, a piece of machinery, how does it run, is it worth the price? It's very uncomfortable for them to look at a piece and have the woman's rationale for wanting it be 'It's pretty.'"

And Dowd's volunteer labors have paid off in her jewelry business, as well. One of her fellow trustees at Norwich owns a diamond company, from which Dowd is able to order her diamonds directly, eliminating middlemen.

Dowd enjoys her second life as a jeweler, more than her first life as an educator. Now living in Jupiter, Florida, in the winter, Dowd also has a private jewelry collection there.

And she's still active in her third life, volunteering. She just stepped down from the Board of Governors for Admiral's Cove, in Jupiter, and in February, will be organizing a fundraiser for the Jupiter police and school safety programs.

Dowd is a strong advocate of town service, and is grateful to those who have given their time to Duxbury. She'd like to see more people get involved. "I feel strongly that the town should get more involved in the selection of their elected officials," she said. "If they got more involved and if they were more supportive in the development of a candidacy for an office, they'd be more confident in what that person would do for them."